



Hummingbirds

Ronald I. Orenstein

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A comprehensive natural history of nature's smallest bird species.

The tiny hummingbird has long been a source of fascination for birdwatchers and naturalists alike. They number 300 species and Ronald Orenstein has a passion for all of them.

Hummingbirds are the smallest birds in the world. A hummingbird egg is the size of a pea, barely, and the chick that emerges will be smaller than a penny, if that. But these tiny birds pack a powerful engine: a hummingbird's heart beats more than 1,200 times per minute.

Nicknamed the "avian helicopter", a hummingbird's wings beat from 70 times per second in direct flight, to more than 200 times per second when diving. Not surprisingly, that whirlwind of wing power creates a humming sound. To fuel such energy, hummingbirds must eat as much as eight times their body weight on a daily basis, which means visiting an average of 1,000 flowers -- every day -- to get enough nectar.

Hummingbirds are found in North and South America, with the greatest number in Ecuador, although some species breed as far north as Canada. Most species migrate from Mexico to Alaska, a distance of more than 5,000 miles.

In this book Orenstein covers all aspects of hummingbird natural history, their relationship with the plants on which they feed, the miracle of their flight, their elaborate social life and nesting behavior, and their renowned feats of migration.

More than 170 color photographs of these magnificent creatures, taken in the wild, adorn the pages of *Hummingbirds*. Birders and natural history readers alike will gain new insight into the tiny bird and revel in the stunning images.

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